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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to compare Brazilian men and women managers' preferences for using communication versus power-centered strategies when resolving employer/employee disputes. Subjects were 40 men and 40 women in middle and top-management positions. Each manager read a packet of four scripts describing various problems that a manager might have with an employee or fellow manager. Results showed no evidence in any of the scenarios that either men or women managers intended to behave differently toward male than toward female employees. Analysis of two of the scripts indicated that Brazilian men and women managers did not differ significantly in the ways in which they would attempt to resolve disputes with employees who were disgruntled because they were being asked to do something not in their job descriptions. Male and female managers were nearly equally divided in their preferences for using communication, power, or some combination thereof in attempting to resolve disputes with employees. Brazilian women were somewhat more likely than men to use some form of communication when attempting to resolve disputes with employees who had apparently violated chains of command. However, both men and women managers identified power as the preferred mechanism for resolving this particular dispute. Appendices include all four scripts (in both English and Portuguese), examples of the three response modes, and six tables showing the study data. (HTH)

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Differences Between Brazilian Men and Women Managers in Their Managing of Conflicts With Employees

by

Ana Maria Rossi and William R. Todd-Mancillas

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Abstract

This study compared Brazilian men and women managers' preferences for using communication versus power-centered strategies when resolving employer/employee disputes. When there was an explicit, well defined (and--from the employee's perspective--justifiable) dispute concerning what the employee was being asked to do and what was explicated in his/her job description, no differences emerged between men and women managers in their reported preferences for resolving the dispute. Both male and female managers appeared equally divided in their use of power and communication. These findings are identical to previously obtained findings on American men's and women's strategies for resolving this type of dispute.

Similar responses were also obtained for Brazilian men and women managers in their preferred manner of resolving a dispute in which there had been an ambiguous violation of the company chain of command. Both Brazilian men and women reported a distinct preference for using power; i.e., disciplining employees. This finding differs from the results of an otherwise identical study done in the United States comparing the responses of American men and women managers. It appears, then, that Brazilian women managers are more likely than American women managers to use power as a means of resolving this problem. Why Brazilian women managers are more likely than American women managers to use power is an interesting question, one indicating possible intercultural differences in managerial contexts.

Differences Between Brazilian Men and Women Managers in Their Managing of Conflicts with Employees

Many scholars have been concerned with comparing and constrasting communication strategies used by men and women managers. Recent research indicates consistent differences, with women managers tending to be more open, responsive, and communicative than men managers (Baird and Bradley, 1979; Todd-Mancillas and Rossi, 1985). However, these findings have been drawn from research done on American men and women managers and, therefore, may not apply to communication differences between men and women managers in other countries.

This study attempts to expand our understanding of communication strategies used by Brazilian men and women managers. By contrasting the communication strategies of American and Brazilian managers, one may better appreciate the difference culture makes in sanctioning certain norms and communication strategies (Lannon, 1977).

The first author is a native of Brazil, with many business contacts in Porto Alegre. Accordingly, the first author was able to collect a considerable amount of data about Brazilian men's and women's managerial communication behavior. Futher, in a previous study the authors had already collected and analyzed systematically a large boyd of data contrasting American men's and women's managerial communication when attempting to resolve disputes with subordinates (Todd-Mancillas and Rossi, 1985). For the purpose of this study, a similar data collection effort was undertaken in Porto Alegre, with 40 men and 40 women managers interviewed to identify their preferred communication strategies when attempting to resolve disputes with employees. This data was then compared with the previously collected data on American men and women managers. This comparison proved useful for answering the basic research question of this study: In what ways (if any) do Brazilian men and women

managers differ from one another in their communication strategies when resolving disputes with subordinates?

Procedures

Interviewees

All 80 managers (40 Brazilian men, 40 Brazlian women) participating in this study worked in middle and top-management positions. All of them lived and work in Porto Alegre, an economically progressive coastal city.

Data Collection Procedure

Each manager was asked to read a packet of four scripts describing various problems that a manager might have with an employee or another manager of equal status as themself. Each of these scripts described critical incidents validated by previous research personnel problems frequently encountered by managers (Rossi and Wolesensky, 1983). While these scripts were initially constructed on the basis of interviews conducted with American managers (Wolesensky, 1981), they were also representative of personnel problems encountered by Brazilian managers.

Script A describes an instance in which an employee expresses reluctance to do an assigned task not included in his/her job description (see Appendix A). Script B describes an instance in which an employee violates (apparently inadvertently) the established chain of command (see Appendix B). Script C involves a dispute in which an employee challenges the manager's competence to give correct instructions on how to do an assigned task (see Appendix C). Script D is different from the others in that it involves a dispute between a newly hired high-level employee and other high-level employees (managers), who

challenge the former's authority to introduce a change in termination policy (see Appendix D). Script D contains sufficient ambiguity to make less than clear whether the newly hired high-level employee has the authority to impose changes in personnel policy on the managers.

Four versions of each script were utilized, matching all possible cominations of men and women managers with male and female employees. After reading the scripts, interviewees were asked to explain how they would resolve the problems.

Coding Procedures

Using a previously established and validated coding procedure (Rossi and Todd-Mancillas, 1985), the responses were read and assigned to one of three classifications. Responses were assigned a Communication classification if they indicated that the primary means of resolving the dispute was through discussion with the employee which, at least to some extent, considered objectively the employee's perspective and used neither coercion nor threat, but rather nonmanipulative persuasion in obtaining compliance (see Appendix E).

Responses were assigned an Organizational Power classification if they indicated that the employee would be forced to follow the manager's directives (or sanctioned for presumably not having followed them in the first place). Usually, responses received organizational power classifications for one of two reasons: (1) the respondent made an explicit comment to the effect that the employee would be reprimanded or threatened with dismissal; (2) the respondent did not imply in any way that she would consider objectively the employee's reasons for objecting to or possibly having inadvertently violated the managerial directive in question (see Appendix E).

Lastly, responses were assigned a Mixed Approach classification if they included both an indication to discuss objectively the problem with the employee, coupled with either an implicit or explicit threat of sanction should the employee refuse to comply with the manager's directives (see Appendix E).

Data Analysis Procedures

For the purposes of this paper, only the results of Scripts A and B have been analyzed. The results of Scripts C and D will be analyzed and discussed in a later paper.

After the responses were coded into communication, organizational power, and mixed approach categories, 2 X 3 contingency tables were constructed, preliminary to the analysis of the data using X^2 tests were the conducted to determine what managerial styles predominated in each of the scenarios. First, 2 X 3 X^2 tests were conducted separately for men and women managers to determine whether they responded differently to male employees than to female employees. If both tests were found nonsignificant and, therefore, it appeared that men and women managers responded similarly to male and female employees, the data for male and female employees were combined and a X^2 test was then conducted to determine whether men managers differed from women managers in their overall response styles (see Tables 3 and 4). If it appeared that men and women managers did not differ in their response profiles, then the data for American and Brazilian managers were combined and a one-way (1 X 3) X^2 test was conducted to determine whether one response type was preferred over the others (see Tables 5 and 6). In general, significant X^2 tests were followed by simpler X^2 tests to tease out the conceptually meaningful relationships

attributable managerial gender, response style, and gender of employee.

All X^2 tests were considered significant if the obtained X^2 exceeded 5.99 the critical X^2 needed at the .05 level of significance, with df = 2 (Siegle, 1956).

Results

All Scripts: Tests for Significant Gender of Manager by Gender of Employee Interactions

In none of the scenarios was there obtained evidence of either men or women managers intending to behave differently toward men than women employees (see Tables 1 and 2).

Script A: Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order To Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description

Analysis of the data indicated that Brazilian men and women managers did not differ significantly in the ways in with they would attempt to resolve disputes with employees disgruntled because they were being asked to do something not in their job descriptions (see Table 3). Further, when combining data across gender of manager, neither did there appear to predominate a particular response style (see Table 5). Brazilian men and women managers were nearly equally divided in their preferences for using communication, power, or some combination thereof in attempting to resolve disputes with employees.

Script B: Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command

Analysis of the data indicated that Brazilian women were somewhat more likely than men to use some form of communication when attempting to resolve

disputes with employees who had apparently violated chains of command (see Table 4). Nonetheless, it is also important to note that both women and men managers identified power as the preferred mechanism for resolving this particular dispute (see Table 6).

Discussion

There appears, then, considerable similarity in the management styles of Brazilian men and women managers, at least as indicated by the data analyzed for this paper. Both Brazilian men and women managers appear equally divided in their use of communication and power strategies to resolve disputes with employees contesting (apparently legitimately) tasks assigned to them but which are not specifically included in their job descriptions. Moreover, while, in general, Brazilian women managers appear somewhat more inclined than Brazilian men managers to use some form of communication when resolving disputes with employees who have violated the chain of command, the majority of Brazilian men and women managers identify power strategies as the preferred means of resolving this dispute as well.

These findings are both similar and different from those obtained in a previous investigation in which 80 American men and women managers responded to the same two scenarios described in this study (Rossi and Todd-Mancillas, 1983). They are similar in that the previous investigation also found that American men and women managers were nearly equally divided in their use of communication and power strategies to resolve disputes with employees who had objected to doing something not included in their job description (Scenario A).

This may suggest that there may be a pancultural norm operating in management contexts, which requires communication and negotiation to clarify

what is or is not the responsibility of an employee. However, this study yielded different results from the previous investigation in that when an employee has violated a chain of command, Brazilian women managers appear more similar to Brazilian men managers than American women managers in their reliance on power usage as a preferred means of resolving the problem.

What explains the finding that Brazilian women managers appear somewhat more prone to use power than American women managers? Perhaps the answer lies in recognizing that there are available to American managers, particularly American women managers a greater variety of managerial role models than what exist in Brazil for Brazilian women managers. In Latin America, and to a far greater extent than in the United States, nearly all organizations have a long history of male stewardship (Aguilar, 1975; Ball, 1974). Further, the "machismo" tradition also strongly influences the way in which managers (usually male) supervise their employees (Taylor, 1984). Basically, a tradition of machismo predisposes a manager to be highly concerned about their image as a superior and to behave in a hostile manner when their position is threatened (Christensen, 1975; Paz, 1962). In a society, such as Brazil, where there are few women managers to begin with, and even less diversity in management styles, it may not be surprising that women managers have simply adopted the macho model of management, calling for liberal use of power (and punishment) when sanctioning employees ostensibly challenging their authority.

No such similar tendency may occur in the United States, because there exists in this country a greater variety of role models to follow and because the culture is more attunded to the problems women encounter as they struggle to advance themselves in the market place. (Note, for instance, the plethora

of trade books and talk shows focusing on some or another problem that women must surmount to succeed in business.)

This study is one of the first to be done by communication researchers, which focuses on intercultural factors affecting communication between managers and their employees. Efforts are under way to expand this line of research by translating scenarios used in this study into Chinese and French, so that similar studies can be done in China and France. This additional research, as well as research undertaken by others (e.g., Korzenny, Korzenny, & Sanchez de Rota, 1985), will help us to develop a fuller appreciation for the role culture plays in affecting managerial communication.

Appendix A
(Script A)

Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order To Do Task Not Included In Current Job Description

(Marge/Maria) (Morio/Mario) is the supervisor of several employees in the stock room at an organization. Just recently, the position of inventory control clerk was eliminated. Marge's employees are now responsible for controllling and monitoring the amount of inventory on hand. Marge says, "When an order came in, I assigned the task of doing the inventory work to one of the clerks. She appeared angry, but did do the inventory control work. I found out later, via the grapevine, that the clerk felt she should not have had to do the inventorying. She felt that it was my responsibility to do it with her. The communication problem in this situation was persuading her, after the fact, that it was now her responsibility to inventory the stock she unpacked. I was met with lots of resistance, because it was her expectation that this was my responsibility and vice versa."

Maria (Mario) supervisiona diversos funcionarios no setor de estoque de uma companhia. Recentemente, a posicao do empregado que fazia o balanco de mercandorias foi eliminada na companhia. Agora os empregados de Maria sao responsaveis pelo controle e balanco do estoque. Maria diz que "quando recebemos um carregamento, eu solicitei a uma das funcionarias para fazer o balanco das mercandorias. Ela ficou braba mas terminou por fazer. Descobri mais tarde, atraves de boato no escritorio, que a funcionaria disse que nao deveria ser obrigada a frazer o balanco, pois acreditava que isto era minha responsabilidade. O problema nesta situacao foi o de persuadi-la, depois do fato ter ocorrido, de que de agora em diante ela seria responsavel pelo balanco

Appendix B
(Script B)

Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority
and Violates Chain of Command

(Jean/Nara) (Joseph/Nilo) is the supervisor of a senior clerk and several entry-level clerks in an organization, but she and the senior clerk have experienced difficulties in defining the boundaries of authority in the department. "For example," Jean says, "She had been given responsibility for calculating the statistics of a report that is published by another department. When he encountered an error in some of this data, rather than coming to me with it, he went to the other department manager. This angered the other manager, since he felt that my subordinate should have checked with me before coming to him. I also felt that this was the case, so it was very difficult for me to support my subordinate when the angered department manager contacted me to complain about the senior clerk's "uppity" behavior. If he (the senior clerk) had just come to me first, we could have gone together to the department manager, and none of the anger would have occurred, and lots of time would have been saved in clarifying the error."

(Nara) (Nilo) supervisiona um datilografo e varios outros funcionarios em uma companhia. Entretano, ela e o datilografo tiveram alguma dificuldade em estabelecer o parametro de autoridade do datilografo no departamento. "Por exenplo," disse Nara, "o datilografo era responsavel pelo calculo de um relatorio estatistico que era publicado por um outro departamento. Quando encontrou em erro nos dados fornecidos pelo outro departamento, em vex de me comunicar sobre isto, foi dire_to ao supervisor do outro departamento. O supervisor ficou irritado, pois acha_va que meu funcionario deveria ter me

Appendix C
(Script C)

Employee Challenges Manager's Competence to Give Correct Instructions on How to Do an Assigned Task

(Kathy/Lisa) (Ken/Luiz) was hired by a local company not only to manage the office, but also to check the accuracy of the work being done by the employees. In this capacity, she not only instructs people in the office about how certain procedures are to be carried out, but also is responsible for giving them feedback when they make mistakes. One of the female employees in the office repeatedly made the same mistake in completing a form. When Kathy went to her for the third time to explain how the form was to be completed, she "told me that she didn't think I was right. She suggested that I call the head office and make sure that my instructions were correct. I walked away knowing that I was right, but I called the office anyway. As I suspected, I was right. Only after she had seen me call the head office and get their confirmation did she accept the fact that she was doing something wrong and that my suggestions were right. My feedback alone was not enough, though."

(Lisa) (Luiz) foi admitida em uma companhia local nao apenas para chefiar o escritorio, como tambem para checar a precisao do trabalho executado pelos empregados. Nes to sentido, tinha que instruir os functionarios,daquele setor sobre a maneira co mo certos procedimentos deveriam ser executados e fazer comentarios quando encontrasse erros. Um funcionario no escritorio, continuamente, cometia o mesmo erro ao completar um formulario. Quando Lisa o abordou pela terceira vez para explicar como o formulario deveria ser preenchido, o empregado disse que "ele achava que eu estava errado e sugeriu que eu chamasse o escritorio central para confirmar minha informacao.

Appendix D
(Script D)

High-Level Employee's Authority is Challenged
by Other High-Level Employees (Managers)

(Jane/Jane) (John/Juca) was hired by her employer to develop personnel policies and procedures. The organization had tripled in size since its creation, and the need for someone in this capacity was apparent to her employer. As Jane familarized herself with the organization, she realized the need for reports which specified a supervisor's reason(s) for terminating an employee. All of the supervisors in the organization were men. They reacted to Jane's procedure by telling her that the forms were unnecessary, and since they hadn't done this type of reporting before, why did they need to now. Jane said, "I had to persuade them of the importance of this type of documentation. Two of the supervisors even went to my boss and asked about the necessity of such reports. It was fortunate that my boss endorsed me. However, a great deal of time was wasted in persuading the supervisors. I felt as if I had to defend not only the credibility of the reporting, but also my credibiltiy."

Jane (Juca) foi admitida por seu patrao para desenvolver procedimentos e normas involvendo problemas de demissao no departamento de pessoal. a companhia em que trabalhava havia triplicado em tamanho desde sua criacao e a necessidade de re-organizacoa nesta area era aparente ao empregador. Enquanto Jane se familiarizava com os procedimentos e normas em vigor na companhia, ela se deu conta da necessidade de relatorios especificando a razao ou razoes para demissao de funcionarios. Os gerentes da companhia reagiram as modificacoes sugeridas por Jane dizendo que os formularios que ela queria implementar nao eram necessarios e, como eles nunca precisaram preencher tais formularios

Appendix E

Example of Communication as the Predominate Response Mode

Female Manager

I'd involve all supervisors in my decision so it would be easier to persuade them about the need for change.

Male Manager

I'd involve the other supervisors in my decision. It'd take longer, but in the long run we would save time.

Examples of Use of Power as the Predominate Response Mode

Female Manager

I'd be very angry with my clerk. I'd take him to the other manager to explain himself and would warn him about similar situations in the future.

Male Manager

I'd apologize to the other manager and terminate the clerk. I'd ask that a memo would be sent out to all employees clarifying the lines of communication in the organization.

Examples of Combined Use of Power and Communication as Predominate Response Mode

Female Manager

I'd explain the situation to my employees and I'd try to find a volunteer to do the job. If I couldn't find a volunteer I'd choose someone everytime the task had to be done.

Male Manager

I'd inform the employee of her new duty and would emphasize her qualities to perform the job.

Table 1

Script A

(Employee Relunctantly Complies with Manager's Order to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description)

Women Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	6	6	8
Female Employees	7	9	4

$X^2 = 2.02$

Men Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	9	7	4
Female Employees	4	9	6

$X^2 = 2.55$

Table 2

Script B

(Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command)

Women Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	1	14	5
Female Employees	3	11	5

Men Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Male Employees	1	19	0
Female Employees	1	17	2

NOTE: In each of the above tables, at least two of the six cells have expected frequencies less than 5. Accordingly, it was not appropriate to compute X^2 values (Siegle, 1956). However, inspection of the tables makes apparent that both women and men managers identified power usage as the preferred option, and, further, that neither women nor men managers indicated they would treat male employees differently from female employees.

Table 3

Script A

Women Managers Contrasted with Men Managers

(Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description)

Women Managers

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Women Managers	13	15	12
Men Managers	13	16	10

$X^2 = .20$

Table 4

Script B

Women Managers Contrasted with Men Managers

(Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command)

Response Style

	Communication	Power	Mixed
Women Managers	4	25	10
Men Managers	2	36	02

X^2 = 7.52 (significant at alpha = .05; df = 2).*

* Because two cells had expected frequencies less than 5, the communication and mixed cells were combined, thereby meeting appropriate criteria for the computation of X^2 values, while at the same time allowing one to determine whether one or the other gender had a significant preference for using power.

Table 5

Script A

Data From Women and Men Managers Combined

(Employee Reluctantly Complies with Manager's Order to Do Task Not Included in Current Job Description)

Response Style

Communication	Power	Mixed
26	31	22

$X^2 = 1.54$

Table 6

Script B

Data From Women and Men Managers Combined

(Employee Goes Beyond Boundaries of Authority and Violates Chain of Command)

Response Style

Communication	Power	Mixed
6	61	12

$X^2 = 69.15$ (significant at alpha = .05, df = 2).

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